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Macroeconomic policy questions: international trade and development; international financial system and development

Globalization and interdependence

Prevention of armed conflict

The rule of law at the national and international levels

Letter dated 16 October 2012 from the Chargé d' affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you on behalf of the 105 member States of the Forum of Small States a document entitled "Report of the Conference of Small States" (see annex). A list of members of the Forum of Small States is attached as an appendix.

On behalf of the member States of the Forum of Small States, I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 18 (a) and (b), 22 (a), 33 and 83.

(*Signed*) Mark **Neo**
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Annex to the letter dated 16 October 2012 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Report of the Conference of Small States, held in New York on 1 October 2012

I. Introduction

1. Established in 1992, the Forum of Small States is a diverse, non-ideological and informal grouping at the United Nations. The Forum provides a platform for small States to share information and strategies, to work together on issues of mutual interest and to lend a greater voice to their views and concerns. Currently, the Forum has 105 member States; they are listed in the appendix.

2. The Forum's Conference on Small States was convened at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 1 October 2012 as the capstone event of the grouping's year-long twentieth anniversary celebrations. The aims of the Conference were to raise the international profile of small States and start a dialogue on the role and contributions of small States to the international agenda. Well over 250 participants from more than 120 countries, international organizations and non-governmental bodies participated in this inaugural Conference, which was open to the full membership of the United Nations and interested parties.

II. Opening session of the Conference

3. Following introductory remarks by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Law of Singapore, K. Shanmugam, the Conference was formally opened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon. Keynote addresses were given by the President of the sixty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly, Vuk Jeremić, and the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Hillary Clinton. Mr. Shanmugam recalled the two founding principles of the Forum of Small States — inclusivity and informality. In the 20 years since its inception, the Forum has provided a platform for members to learn from each others' experiences, and become a significant grouping at the United Nations for canvassing for candidature support. Mr. Shanmugam said that small States shared a keen awareness of the external environment and approached issues realistically. He expressed hope that small States could continue to exercise thought leadership on global issues. Mr. Ban highlighted the meaningful role small States could play in global peace and development, especially as "bridge-builders" and mediators. He also felt that small States, particularly developing ones, faced special challenges and that their needs should be adequately addressed. This point was echoed by Mr. Jeremić, who noted that small States appreciated the importance of inclusive multilateral cooperation because of their particular challenges. Mr. Jeremić also said that it was not a State's size, but its ideas, initiatives and dynamism which determined its relevance in the international system. Mrs. Clinton emphasized the interconnected nature of the world and called on small and large States to work together to face current challenges. Small States could play leading roles on important issues on the international agenda, such as in advancing the rule of law,

which would ultimately determine the success of a country's development, and human rights. She affirmed the commitment of the United States to working with and learning from small States.

III. Morning session on small States and their role in international relations

4. The session was moderated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Law of Singapore, and featured the following panellists:

(a) Eamon Gilmore, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland, spoke about the role of small States in regional organizations, drawing on Ireland's experience as the current Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and its forthcoming Presidency of the European Union. Membership of a regional organization had the potential to amplify a small State's voice, but vigilance was necessary as to the potential risks (introversion and lowest common denominator approaches). While small States were natural consensus builders, they had to deal with resource challenges and be ready to withstand pressure. Other points explored were (i) embracing a small State identity but not being constrained by it, (ii) what "small State sensibilities" mean in practice and (iii) small States as special custodians of multilateralism.

(b) Emmanuel Issoze-Ngondet, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, focused on small States' contributions to regional and international peace and security. He highlighted the participation of countries of the Forum of Small States in mediation efforts and United Nations peacekeeping missions. He also spoke about Gabon's experiences as a member of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for three terms. He emphasized the importance of conflict prevention to avoid unnecessary loss of life and costly peacekeeping operations.

(c) Kieren Keke, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nauru, spoke about Nauru's experience as the current chair of the Alliance of Small Island States and said that micro-States could lead international negotiations. Nauru's smallness had given it a unique and valuable perspective that would not be represented by large Powers, and had allowed it to express its views more candidly. He suggested that small States focus on issues relevant to the international community and of critical national importance, such as climate change and sustainable development. He stressed that the principles of sovereignty and equal votes at the United Nations would allow the views of small States to be taken into account.

(d) Vladimir Makei, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, said that globalization had significantly increased the contributions of small States to international relations. He highlighted that the rise of small States had established a truly global multipolar order, but had also created a multitude of international players, resulting in greater difficulty for all the States to agree on common action. He stressed that small States should unite as a coherent force to stand on an equal footing with large Powers. He called for small States to lead global partnerships and empower the United Nations.

(e) Murray McCully, Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, called for an improvement in the way that the United Nations served the interests of small

States. He said that small States were often the object of United Nations focus but were not given opportunities to present their views, even when the decisions made affected them directly. Small States were often marginalized in the United Nations. He emphasized the need to reform the United Nations Security Council to make it more transparent and accountable to all States. New Zealand and other small States had a huge stake in establishing effective multilateral institutions and clear rules for acceptable behaviour.

5. Several participants made statements from the floor. Urmas Paet, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia, outlined the strength of small States in international politics and highlighted Estonia's contributions in the field of information and communication technology. José Badia, Counsellor for External Relations of Monaco, stated that small States constituted the majority of the United Nations and he emphasized the importance of openness and transparency as well as capacity-building for small States. Marie-Joseé Jacobs, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs of Luxembourg, gave Luxembourg's perspectives on how small States could contribute to global affairs, multilateral diplomacy and international security. Mamadou Tangara, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad of Gambia, called for concerted international action to fulfil the development goals of small States, in particular least developed countries, in areas such as poverty reduction and food security. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Djibouti, called for the reinforcement of the objective of the Forum of Small States as a platform for small States to form strategies and synergies to enhance their decisions at the United Nations. Cesare Maria Ragaglini, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations, highlighted nimbleness and flexibility as the two major features of small States that could build consensus within the international community on crucial issues.

6. In summing up the morning panel session, Mr. Shanmugam highlighted the common themes of the interventions, including the significant advantages small States enjoyed by having faster decision-making and implementation processes, and a keener awareness of the external environment. Small States could overcome physical challenges, such as challenges of size and geography, by cooperating with like-minded countries. He added that small States should work to ensure better streamlining of United Nations processes to improve the Organization's efficiency, including through reform of the Security Council.

IV. Working lunch on small States and mediation

7. Martti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, delivered the keynote address at the working lunch. The session was moderated by Chew Tai Soo, Ambassador-at-Large of Singapore, who highlighted the qualities that made Mr. Ahtisaari an accomplished negotiator, including his realism, pragmatism, fairness, toughness and decisiveness. Mr. Ahtisaari also had an excellent sense of timing, particularly with regard to the right juncture to intervene for "frozen conflicts".

8. In his address, Mr. Ahtisaari noted that small States faced a variety of development challenges and vulnerabilities due to their inherent limitations. However, they were more flexible and adaptable to global challenges. In addition,

well-organized small States could play a constructive role in the resolution of conflicts. He pointed to Singapore's initiative to establish the Forum of Small States as an example of how small nations could create a big, benign impact. Small players in international relations did not always have to be pawns on the chessboard, as long as they demonstrated the capacity to cooperate, to be trustworthy, and to be good sports. It was in the interest of small States to promote the observance of international law as they thrived best in a world where law and consensus were the norms underpinning international relations. He firmly believed that all conflicts could be resolved. However, he acknowledged that some difficult conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could only be resolved with the joint effort of major Powers and other parties.

9. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Jan Eliasson, urged small States to stand up for impartiality and to play a more active role in mediation. Drawing from his experience in negotiating the peace agreement between the Free Aceh Movement and the Government of Indonesia, Mr. Ahtisaari said that it was not always easy to be impartial; what was most important was to be seen as an honest broker and a flexible negotiator. Peter Thomson, Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations, suggested that the Forum of Small States should organize further meetings to discuss the role of small States in the mediation of international conflicts.

10. Riyad H. Mansour, Ambassador and Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, asked what role small States could play in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly when bigger States had been unable to make any progress. Mr. Ahtisaari said that small States had to maintain a principled approach and keep to all the principles that had been accepted by the international community. Abdulkhaleq Bin-Dhaaer Al-Yafei, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, noted that there had been little progress in the Middle East peace process and asked for Mr. Ahtisaari's views on how it would evolve in the middle to long term. Mr. Ahtisaari said that small States, being innovative, could come up with new ideas to move the Middle East peace process forward.

V. Afternoon session on small States and their drive to development

11. The session was moderated by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Helen Clark, and featured the following panellists:

(a) Jigmi Y. Thinley, Prime Minister of Bhutan, delivered the keynote address. He spoke about Bhutan's unconventional developmental path based on the "Gross National Happiness" (GNH) index. This holistic framework had delivered positive results for Bhutan in achieving its developmental goals without sacrificing gross domestic product growth. Despite being a small country, Bhutan has gained international recognition for its implementation of the GNH index. Mr. Thinley stressed that multilateralism was important for small States as it provided a platform for them to get their voices heard. He therefore urged small States to act in concert where their interests converged, for example, to push for legitimate representation by small States on elected United Nations bodies.

(b) Louise Mushikiwabo, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Rwanda, spoke of Rwanda's successful journey in rebuilding the country after the genocide in 1994. She highlighted that Rwanda's progress was possible because the Rwandan leadership had learned from painful past lessons and took an inclusive and consultative approach to governance by giving citizens ownership over the country's development. Rwanda had also driven its economy forward by working towards regional economic integration in East Africa.

(c) Winston Dookeran, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, said that the vulnerability of small States was a permanent feature and an economic reality that big States and international financial institutions needed to recognize. It was important for small States to have resilient domestic economies by setting up internal buffers to cushion the impact of external shocks. Such internal buffers included accumulating reserves and using them to raise the level of development domestically. Small States also had to build partnerships at all levels to enlarge their political space.

(d) Heidi Hautala, Minister for International Development of Finland, said that global interconnectivity necessitated that all States work together to address transboundary problems. Small States could play a key role in spearheading such discussions. In particular, she urged small States to cooperate on strengthening financial governance and to develop assets such as transparent governance and an independent judiciary. Given the rapid pace of globalization, small States also had to constantly reinvent themselves. Social cohesion was crucial in bringing a small State through economic difficulties.

(e) Yusuf bin Alawai bin Abdullah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman, expressed concern over food security. He urged the United Nations and all countries to work towards developing food reserves around the world, which would benefit all countries in the event of food crises.

12. Several participants made remarks from the floor. Octavio Errázuriz, Permanent Representative of Chile, said there was a need to streamline efforts on developmental issues to avoid the risk of duplication of efforts and weakening of the developmental agenda. Gary Quinlan, Permanent Representative of Australia, underscored Australia's commitment to partnering small States to achieve their Millennium Development Goals and supporting their representation in multilateral organizations. Philippe Kridelka, representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to the United Nations, and Dominique Bichara, special representative of the World Bank to the United Nations, reaffirmed their organizations' commitment to working with small States to promote their development.

13. In her closing remarks, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme observed that a common theme for the small States participating in the panel discussion was the importance of multilateralism and how it translated into practical governance that provided real benefits to the people. Ms. Clark acknowledged that small States suffered the most from the inability to conclude a global, multilateral trade deal and highlighted the importance of pushing the trade agenda further ahead.

Appendix

Members of the Forum of Small States

Albania	Denmark	Liechtenstein
Andorra	Djibouti	Lithuania
Antigua and Barbuda	Dominican Republic	Luxembourg
Armenia	El Salvador	Maldives
Austria	Estonia	Malta
Azerbaijan	Fiji	Marshall Islands
Bahamas	Finland	Mauritania
Bahrain	Gabon	Mauritius
Barbados	Gambia	Monaco
Belarus	Georgia	Mongolia
Belize	Grenada	Montenegro
Benin	Guinea-Bissau	Namibia
Bhutan	Guyana	Nauru
Bolivia	Haiti	New Zealand
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Honduras	Nicaragua
Botswana	Hungary	Norway
Brunei Darussalam	Iceland	Oman
Bulgaria	Ireland	Palau
Burundi	Jamaica	Panama
Cambodia	Jordan	Papua New Guinea
Cape Verde	Kuwait	Paraguay
Central African Republic	Kyrgyzstan	Qatar
Comoros	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Republic of Moldova
Costa Rica	Latvia	Rwanda
Croatia	Lesotho	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Cyprus	Libya	Saint Lucia
Czech Republic	Liberia	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Samoa	Slovenia	Togo
San Marino	Solomon Islands	Tonga
Senegal	Suriname	Trinidad and Tobago
Seychelles	Swaziland	Tunisia
Serbia	Sweden	United Arab Emirates
Sierra Leone	Switzerland	Uruguay
Singapore	The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Vanuatu
Slovakia	Timor-Leste	Zambia